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TEPE 2019, Krakow

**Narratives of collaboration in practice;
discourses, dimensions and diversity in
collaborative professional development**

Professor Rachel Lofthouse
CollectivED

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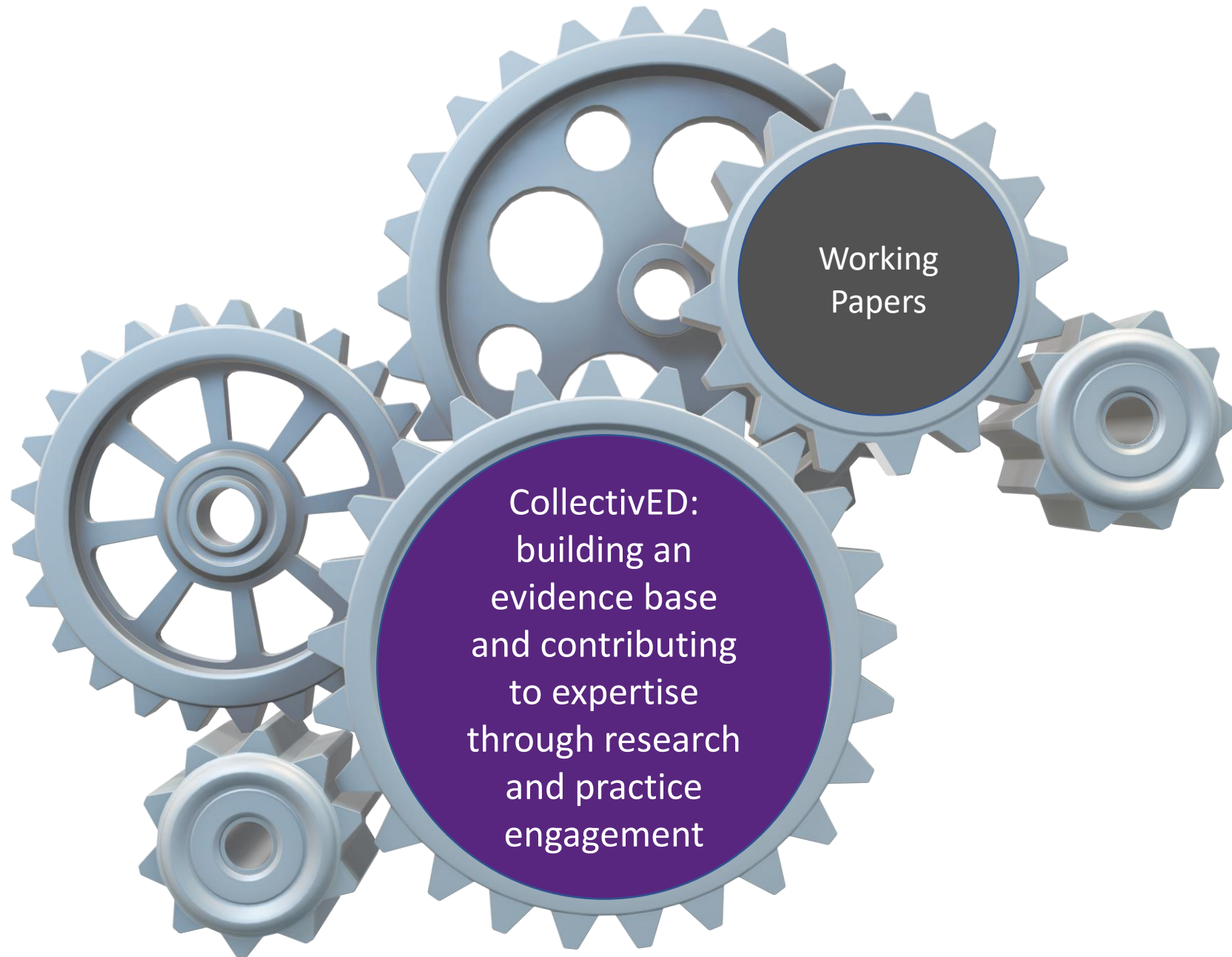
International
profile and
study visits

Articles in
academic
and
professional
publications

Funded
research
projects
(from £4k
to £400,00)

Twitter
followers,
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Professional
and academic
conference
contributions



Working
Papers

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and contributing
to expertise
through research
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Practice Insight Working Papers

Research Working Papers

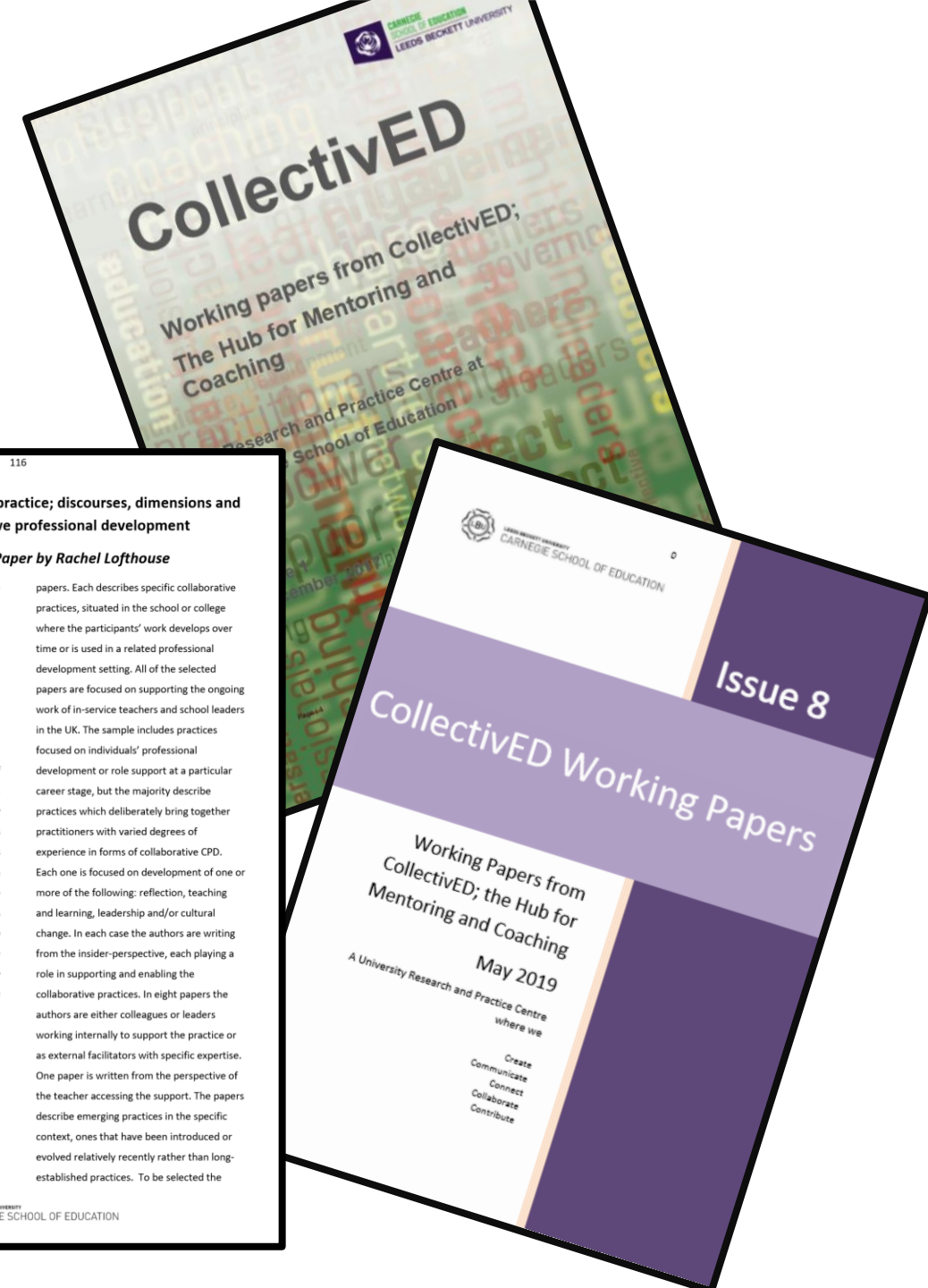
Think Piece Working Papers

Book and conference reviews

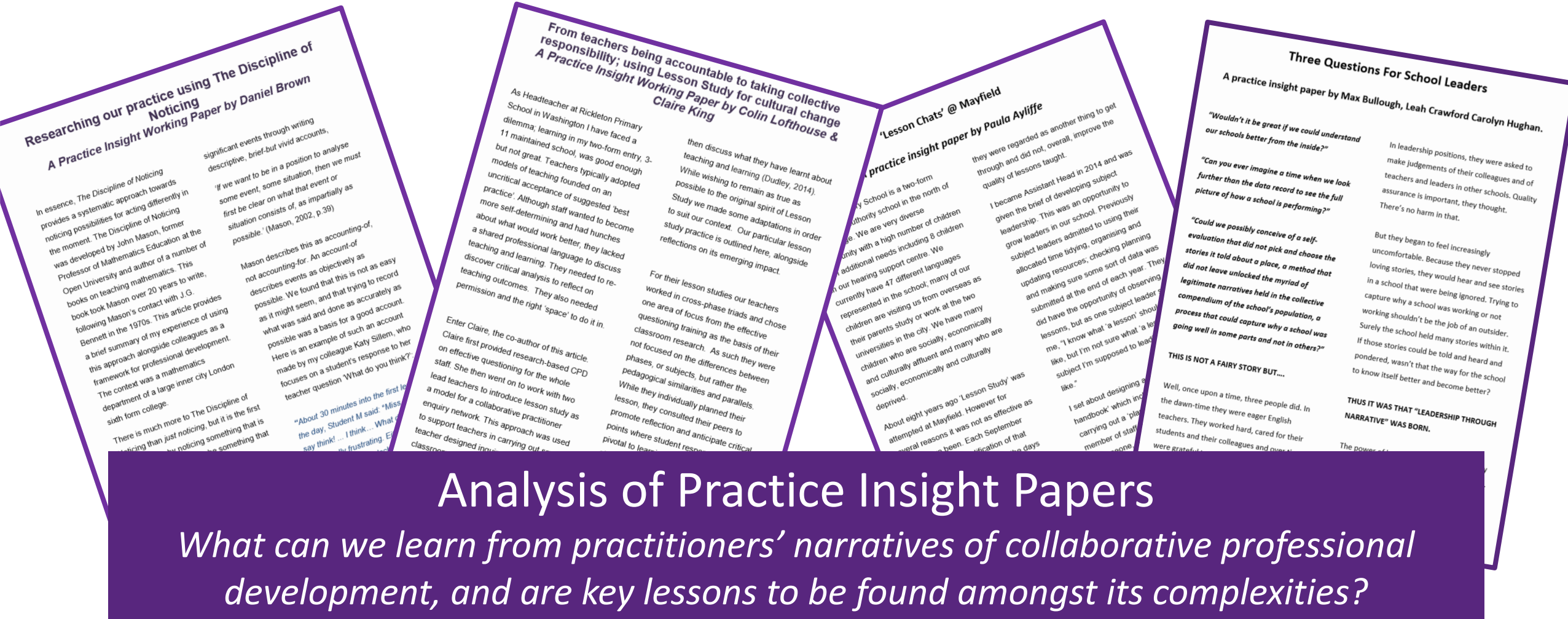
In conversation interviews

SEARCH

- CollectivED Leeds
- Find working papers link
- <https://www.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/carnegie-school-of-education/research/working-paper-series/collectived/>
- Over 120 papers, from 14 countries
- Authors include students, teachers, school leaders, coaches, mentors, consultants, research students, teacher educators, academics
- This conference paper is published in Issue 8, p.116.



Narratives of collaboration in practice; discourses, dimensions and diversity in collaborative professional development



Paper title	Author(s) & positionality	Focus of practice	Context	Summary used in this paper
Researching our practice using The Discipline of Noticing	Daniel Brown; Internal facilitator & middle leader	Collaborative CPD	FE	Discipline of Noticing
From teachers being accountable to taking collective responsibility' using Lesson Study for cultural change	Colin Lofthouse; Headteacher Claire King; External facilitator	Collaborative CPD	Primary	Lesson Study
Breathing Space; enabling professional learning through alternative staff meetings	Rebecca Jackson; Headteacher	Collaborative CPD	Primary	Alternative staff meetings
Developing a learning culture in schools	George Gilchrist; Headteacher & Internal facilitator	Collaborative CPD	Primary	Learning Culture
Working together: Coaching as the compass in the journey of implementation	Kelly Ashley and North Star TSA; External facilitator with Teaching School	SSIF project Coaching	10 primary schools	SSIF Project Coaching
Thinking Environments	Lou Mycroft; External facilitator	Collaborative CPD	FE	Thinking Environment
Being mentored through CTeach	Stephen Campbell; Teacher / mentee	Career development mentoring; (Chartered Teacher)	Secondary	CT mentoring
Three questions for school leaders.	Max Bullough, Leah Crawford, Carolyn Hughan; External facilitators	Leadership support	Primary and secondary schools	Leadership through Narrative
Lesson chats @Mayfield	Paula Ayliffe; Deputy headteacher & then Headteacher	Collaborative CPD	Primary	Lesson Chats

Developing sub-themes

D. Changes to professional practice

	D1. Agency: Willingness to take action and take responsibility Linked to future roles	D2. Relational agency: Proactive – seeking more support Helped collaborate	D3. Impact on T&L (e.g.) More nuanced understanding of T&L New methods of approaching key tasks
Researching our practice using The Discipline of Noticing	I have become more aware of the continuum between telling and encouraging students to form their own opinions and explanations during this project, and have since experimented with moving around it as consciously as possible." (teacher 2)		It is not easy to measure the effect this work had on teaching, and children's learning. There was an improvement in exam results, although it is impossible to say how much of this can be attributed to this work on noticing.
From teachers being accountable to taking collective responsibility/ using Lesson Study for cultural change	Though still a work in progress the use of Lesson Study has supported staff to take responsibility for the continued development of their knowledge and skills through self- and co-regulated learning	By giving teachers greater ownership of the improvement effort the senior leadership team are now seeing teachers display a much stronger commitment to learn from, with and on behalf of each other and their pupils.	
Breathing Space; enabling professional learning through alternative staff meetings	Once again there are plans to engage pupils in the decision making.		Examples of chosen focus areas included: reading related projects, alternative approaches to grouping children, EYs outdoor space and developing pupil researchers. The discussions revealed details of the impacts. The children enjoyed the time to explore new books, found themselves immersed in the stories, and used it as an opportunity to get dressed up and role play. During a school governor observation visit it was recognised that the children were talking about more about books, using wider vocabulary, and showing real enthusiasm for stories and reading.

Developing a learning culture in schools	They developed teacher agency and their willingness to take action.		They became innovative. For our learners, attainment and achievement were raised and they saw teachers modelling themselves as learners.
Working together: Coaching as the compass in the journey of implementation authors		'Coaching has helped me to collaborate with the Headteacher to keep the momentum of the project going to that staff and children continue to engage.' (English lead)	
Thinking Environments		Participants asked questions, sought mentoring support and invited us in to train their staff - and management - teams.	APs began to recognise their own strengths in using thinking environment applications to break up ground for new thinking.
Being mentored through CPD	Chartered College currently plans to use teachers who have recently been awarded CPD status as the coaches of future cohorts. Thus, my coach is not only teaching me how to improve and develop, but also how to coach in the future.		
Three questions for school leaders.	The leadership teams are given a working title for their school's story and agree two core priorities that emerge, one the list of things to celebrate more, and the other the list of areas for further action. Some have called this the school's new improvement plan.		
Lesson chats	"But with a few breaks, and using the resources in a more open ended way, made a huge difference to my confidence and in turn the quality of the lesson for the children." (teacher participant)		the children are having more thought through lessons which have their own needs and interests in mind, and the whole school curriculum is more innovative than before

E. Cultural or collective changes

	E1. Ongoing collaboration and critical engagement; based on trust, respect and deeper relationships between staff. This results in more shared thinking collaboration over time.	E3. Links to school improvement: To generating more ideas Changing hierarchies and distributing leadership
Researching our practice using The Discipline of Noticing	Week 10 "For me, it is about supporting and challenging colleagues, resulting in the deepening of professional and personal relationships." We found that we became increasingly able to challenge each other's beliefs and practices. I suspect this comes from the formation of trust.	
From teachers being accountable to taking collective responsibility/ using Lesson Study for cultural change	A significant turning point, from a whole school point of view, came when the first triad to complete their cycle presented their findings and views to their colleagues in a twilight meeting. Lesson Study process provided a frame in which questioning, as both a pedagogic focus and an adult learning tool, helped to build collaborative relationships as the teachers became better listeners.	As the teachers presented their findings the interest, engagement and excitement was palpable. Teachers who had never previously stood up in front of their colleagues to present learning about their practice had the undivided attention of their colleagues and rich and purposeful dialogue ensued.
Breathing Space; enabling professional learning through alternative staff meetings	Discussions brought teachers together to consider how they could work more collectively between year groups. It allowed us to explore the implications for transition between classes at the end of the year. With regards to the reading focus in several year groups An emerging idea was that the teachers could take turns to read with each other's classes, maintaining part of the essence of the scheme in which the reader visits the class for a special and valued session.	They are constantly refreshing their thinking and practice and their decisions are rooted in the realities of our school, the learning opportunities and challenges they wanted to offer our pupils and their families and the ambitions they had for our school's future.

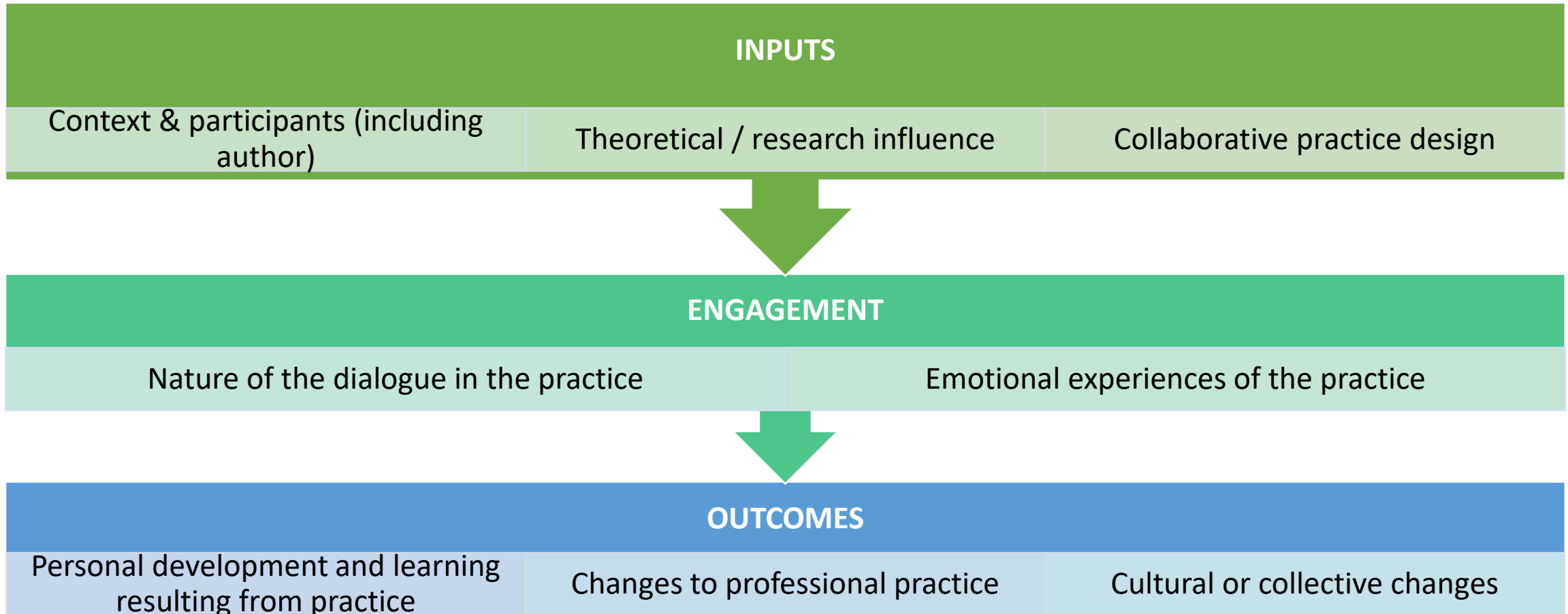
Developing a learning culture in schools	They developed more collaborative working practices.	... deepen and enhance the learning culture in, and across, both schools. Teacher-leadership and dispersed/distributed leadership began to develop, as previous hierarchies were 'flattened'; and everyone recognised each person had a role in how the schools developed.
Working together: Coaching as the compass in the journey of implementation authors	Working more effectively with colleagues in collaboration to maximise pupil progress "The opportunity to work with a variety of different schools has helped me realise that improvement must be co-created and owned in order to effectively implement change." (Hub lead)	Power of working in coaching partnerships with other leaders - thinking more critically about school improvement "The use of coaching has really helped me to empower others." (Hub lead) "Hub days have been a great opportunity to network with other schools and share ideas." (Science lead)
Thinking Environments	"But the energy it created was infectious, to the point that the whole workplace was setting up their own communities for everything from observation support meetings, to lesson planning and even a mud run 'community of practice'."	Thinking environment processes cut to the heart of where power sits in an organisation and can be significant in enabling culture change.
Being mentored through CPD		
Three questions for school leaders.		
Lesson chats	When reviewing appraisal requests at the end of 2017-18, 'lesson chats' were requested by 82% of the teaching staff, not because they were identified as needing further support, but because they wanted it.	Subject leaders continue to observe lessons, check other planning, monitor standards but do so with the increased understanding of how to do this in a more supportive, collaborative way.

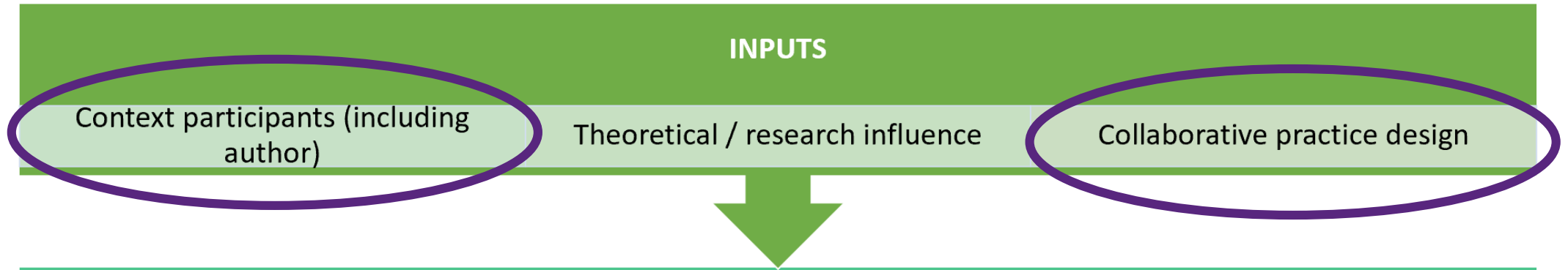
F. Tensions

	F1. Schools / teachers are resistant to change: Breaks down norms of practice and existing hierarchies Some school practices have eroded trust	F2. Difficulty: Takes time, effort, resources Need to engage emotionally and cognitively to take ownership	F3. Needs different leadership approaches: Cannot micromanage Need sustained support
Researching our practice using The Discipline of Noticing		Varied levels of participation Whilst all six teachers in the department considered The Discipline of Noticing to be a good idea, only three of us managed to systematically record accounts over a period of time. Setting oneself to notice and systematically record events requires commitment.	Staying realistic Whilst professional development is about personal change, I think it is dangerous to desire or expect it. Paradoxically, in realising that we cannot change others, change becomes possible.
From teachers being accountable to taking collective responsibility/ using Lesson Study for cultural change		In a time of tightening budgets will an external role of 'expert other' be affordable? If we prioritise it we need to consider how the time and effort afforded to it can be used to ensure that there is a sustainable future and builds on the growing expertise of teachers to support future Lesson Study, in our school or beyond.	There will always be a question of sustainability of the external facilitation and expertise provided
Breathing Space; enabling professional learning through alternative staff meetings	Tendencies for staff to be pre-occupied with other school-based tasks rather than fully attending the meetings were reduced by holding them off site.	The logistical issues of ensuring time was allocated to this were overcome with the re-allocation of existing staff meeting time to these discussions	The inclusion of the headteacher in the group could have been a leadership keeping a watchful eye, but her participation as colleague with her

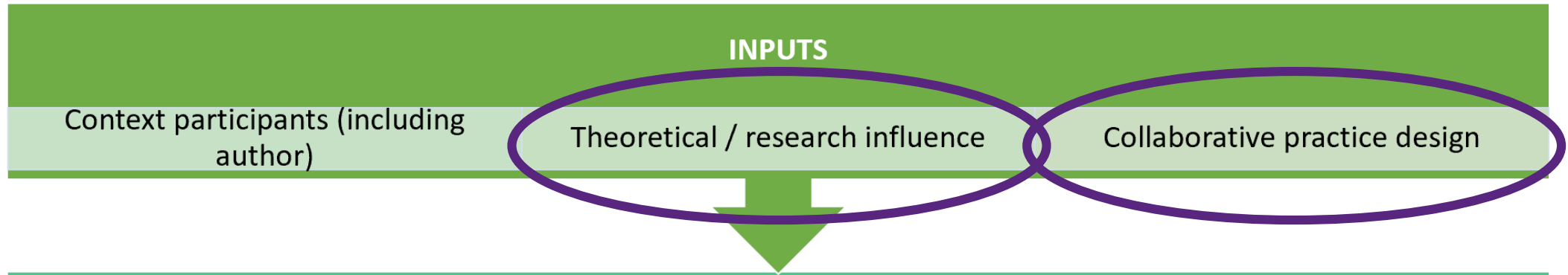
		with the schedule planned out from the start to the end of the year.	own project reduced this potential problem.
Developing a learning culture in schools	Supporting people, to recognise how they can change and develop their thinking and their practice, takes time, especially if they are used to strict hierarchies characterised by low levels of trust, and high levels of accountability. When they have been exposed to those types of cultures, their ability to think and act like individual professional practitioners, is taken away from them, as they get used to being told what to do, when to do it and what resources to use to deliver it! They lose the ability to think creatively, to take risks and to be professionally curious. Worst of all, is they distrust school leadership, learn to keep their heads down and how to survive through surface-level compliance.	Breaking down such behaviours and attitudes takes time and trust. For anything to be sustainable or embedded into the culture of schools and systems, it is essential that we win over hearts and minds of the people who bring that culture to life.	You cannot micromanage and mandate improvement, but you can create the conditions and culture whereby people are consistently reflecting on practice,
Working together: Coaching as the compass in the journey of implementation authors	Before the project began, we planned our route carefully, linking evidence of 'what works' for implementation to our intended project activities. We ensured the centrality of project ownership, offering schools opportunities to adapt the 'journey' to their own context without losing project integrity, resulting in schools		Core strategic leadership was established and strengthened, using coaching as the 'compass' - leading the way and empowering staff as they adopted principles to improve writing across the curriculum. Careful, planned monitoring of impact throughout has helped to steer the course of implementation and ensure

Ecosystemic approach to analysing the narratives of collaborative practices

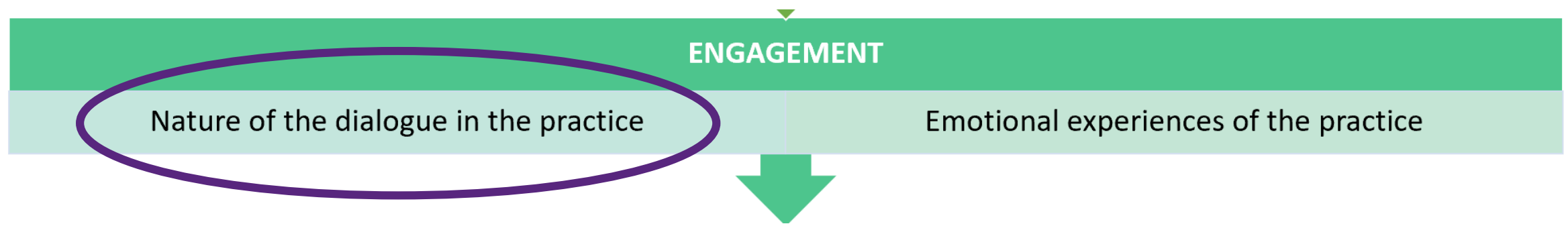




- In four cases (all primary schools) all members of teaching staff are involved with the collaborative practice and the school leaders are involved as facilitators, coaches or participants.
- In one case the collaborative practice involves a teacher and an external coach / mentor as part of a new professional initiative set up by the Chartered College of Teaching and allowing both participants to engage in wider professional networks.
- In the other four cases participation depended on an individual's professional role in their setting, for example Advanced Practitioners across FE colleges, members of a subject department in single FE college, Specialist Leaders in Education and subject leaders in project schools, or membership of leadership teams.
- **There is evidence of how the scope, scale and design of the collaborative practices has been determined by the nature of expected participation.**



- All based on broad theories of teacher learning, such as the value of reflection, but in some cases the facilitators draw on and cite specific practices with established design principles, including Lesson Study (Dudley, 2015), Thinking Environments (Kline, 2009), Discipline of Noticing (Mason, 2002).
- Others are informed by range of influences, including coaching (Lofthouse et al. 2010), practitioner inquiry (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009) and appreciative enquiry (Reed, 2007) from which the collaborative practices have been designed.
- **The designs of the approaches and principles are deliberate not only because of the anticipated opportunities that will arise but also as a means to moderate some of the likely tensions and difficulties.**



Nature of dialogue sub-themes	Examples from working papers
A1. The content / focus of the discussion: e.g. related to aspects of teaching and learning, or drawing on research	"I came away from the initial chat needing to research a few things and then I fed them back to the teacher and we ended up team teaching the lesson." (Lesson chats, quote from subject leader)
A2. The collaborative nature of the dialogue: e.g. developing conversation skills (such as listening, asking good questions, not interrupting), sharing experiences, building shared language, sense of ownerships, mutually beneficial	'We found that it was important that people could speak at length without fear of being interrupted, judged, or receiving unsolicited advice. It transformed the way we listened to, and supported, each other as a department.' (Discipline of Noticing)
A3. The challenging aspect of the dialogue: probing, developing critical thinking, making links, enabling others to problem solve and making decisions, and this being sequenced over time.	'identified possible changes to pedagogy and strategies used, in order to address these issues and participants were able to see how we were connecting all the 'things' we had to do, through a focus on learning and our learners' (Learning Culture)

ENGAGEMENT

Nature of the dialogue in the practice

Emotional experiences of the practice

Emotional engagement sub-themes	Examples from working papers
B1. Feeling willing to engage with the process; not experiencing it as a threat and not being afraid to challenge each other. This leads to participants feeling less defensive, admitting when help needed, and reframing perceived issues as positives and possibilities.	‘Staff were no longer afraid to challenge each other and were less defensive about their own practice and able to ask questions to clarify their understanding.’ (Lesson Study)
B2. Building positive relationships; feeling respected, experiencing kindness and support and gaining a heightened awareness of own and others’ values	‘When members of a school community are asked to share their stories, it heightens their awareness of their histories, their values and their investment in their schools.’ (Leadership through Narrative) ‘Firstly, and perhaps most importantly, my coach is kind and has been kind to me. [...] feeling relaxed comes as a consequence’ (CTeach Mentoring)
B3. Experiencing positive morale; enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the collaborative practice	‘participants had retained a sense of intrigue: "I can't remember what we did, but I felt myself relax as soon as I walked back into this room." (author and participant quote, Thinking Environment)

OUTCOMES

Personal development and learning
resulting from practice

Changes to professional practice

Cultural or collective changes

Personal development and learning sub-themes	Examples from working papers
C1. Impacts on self-efficacy; changing how sees oneself, recognising impact of your work and gaining confidence. This leads to participants being keen to make changes and experiment in their work.	<p>‘become more sensitive to habitual behaviours that may be more or less helpful, towards recognising and then making available other possibilities for acting.’ (Discipline of Noticing)</p> <p>‘Adaptive expertise increased as teachers recognised the impact they were having on learning, and how their learners were reacting to various learning situations. [...] They better understood the importance of relationships.’ (Learning Culture)</p>
C2. Discussions promote new insights to support work. They are thought-provoking, change how participants see things and allow them to gain expertise. Through their ability to reflect they develop clarity and coherence in thinking.	<p>"Thinking environments revolutionised my perceptions of education." (participant quote, Thinking Environment)</p> <p>‘Confidence to work through challenges - co-constructing next steps and empowering others. [...] Learning to adapt without compromising long-term goals Greater awareness and understanding of the role.’ (SSIF Project Coaching)</p>

OUTCOMES

Personal development and learning
resulting from practice

Changes to professional practice

Cultural or collective changes

Impact on professional practice sub-themes	Examples from working papers
D1. Increased agency: a willingness to take action and responsibility. Sometimes this is linked potential future roles.	"I have become more aware of the continuum between telling, and encouraging students to form their own opinions and explanations during this project, and have since experimented with moving around it as consciously as possible." (participant quote, Discipline of Noticing)
D2. Increased relational agency: participants are now more proactive, e.g. seeking more support, or being more collaborative in wider professional life.	'By giving teachers greater ownership of the improvement effort the senior leadership team are now seeing teachers display a much stronger commitment to learn from, with and on behalf of each other and their pupils.' (Lesson Study)
D3. An impact on teaching and learning through more nuanced understanding and adopting methods of approaching key tasks	'The children enjoyed the time to explore new books, found themselves immersed in the stories, and used it as an opportunity to get dressed up and role play. During a school governor observation visit it was recognised that the children were talking about more about books, using wider vocabulary, and showing real enthusiasm for stories and reading.' (Alternative staff meetings)

OUTCOMES

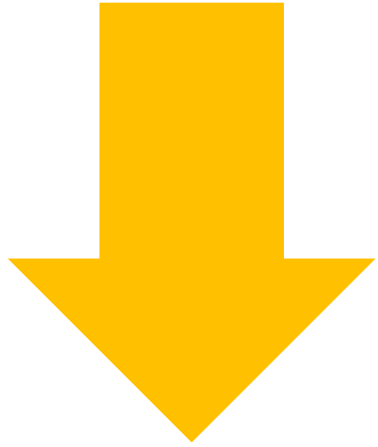
Personal development and learning
resulting from practice

Changes to professional practice

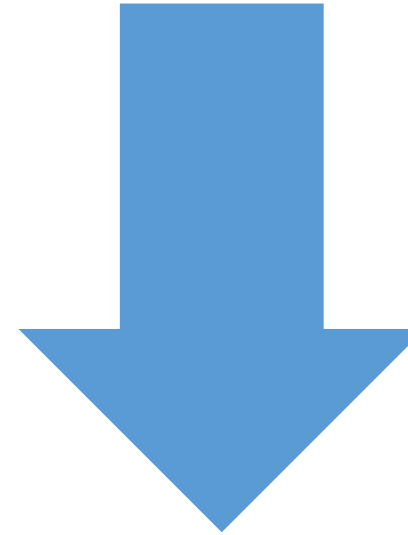
Cultural or collective changes

Impact on collective culture sub-themes	Examples from working papers
E1. Ongoing collaboration and critical engagement; based on trust, respect and deeper relationships between staff. This results in more shared thinking collaboration over time.	<p>'But the energy it created was infectious, to the point that the whole workplace are setting up their own communities for everything from observation support meetings, to lesson planning and even a mud run community of practice.' (participant quote, Thinking Environment)</p> <p>'When reviewing appraisal requests at the end of 2017-18, 'lesson chats' were requested by 82% of the teaching staff, not because they were identified as needing further support, but because they wanted it'. (Lesson Chats)</p>
E2. Links to school / college improvement. Teachers are generating more ideas, there is a change in hierarchy and an emergence of distributed leadership.	<p>'Teacher-leadership and dispersed/distributed leadership began to develop, as previous hierarchies were 'flattened' and everyone recognised each person had a role in how the schools developed.' (Learning Culture)</p> <p>'They are constantly refreshing their thinking and practice and their decisions are rooted in the realities of our school, the learning opportunities and challenges they wanted to offer our pupils and their families and the ambitions they had for our school's future.' (Alternative staff meetings)</p>

Discussion; resistance and trust



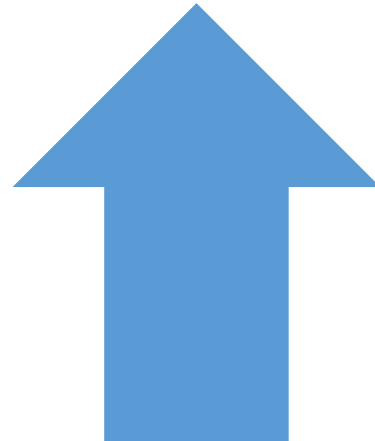
Schools and professionals working in them are often resistant to change. Some of the collaborative practices discussed in the working papers were developed to break down some of the norms of practice and existing hierarchies.



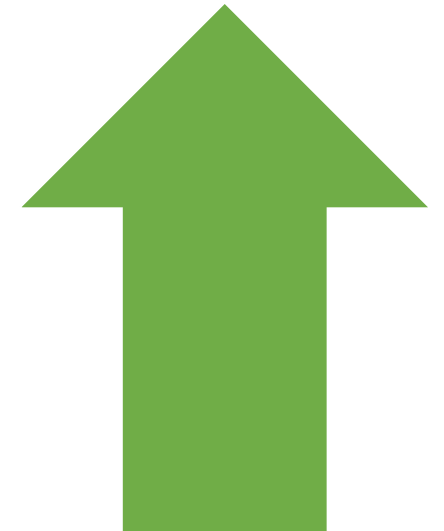
Some practices had eroded trust, e.g. 'When [teachers] have been exposed to those types of cultures, their ability to think and act like individual professional practitioners, is taken away from them [...] They lose the ability to think creatively, to take risks and to be professionally curious.' (Gilchrist, 2017, p.34)



Simple practical solutions were sought to this in the alternative staff meetings example tendencies for staff to be pre-occupied with other school-based tasks rather than fully attending the meetings were reduced by holding them off site. (Jackson, 2017).



Trust can be re-established or can enhanced through the experience of collaboration. e.g. 'Thinking environments can be sabotaged but they can't be subverted: the sabotage is at least out in the open. Being upfront about this has been helpful for educators who are struggling with implementing radical, equalising new practices into organisations built on hierarchies of power.' (Mycroft, 2019, p. 107)



Discussion; engagement and leadership

Collaborative practices are difficult to establish & sustain. They take time to put into operation, they require sustained effort, resourcing. Leaders need to make strategic & operational decisions to support them.

‘We have invested in these days because we know that ‘lesson chats’ are a very effective way of putting CPD into practice.’ (Ayliffe, 2019, p. 89).

‘Will an external ‘expert other’ be affordable? If we prioritise it we need to consider how the time and effort afforded to it can be used to ensure that there is a sustainable future and builds on the growing expertise of teachers to support future Lesson Study, in our school or beyond.’ (Lofthouse and King, 2017. p. 18)

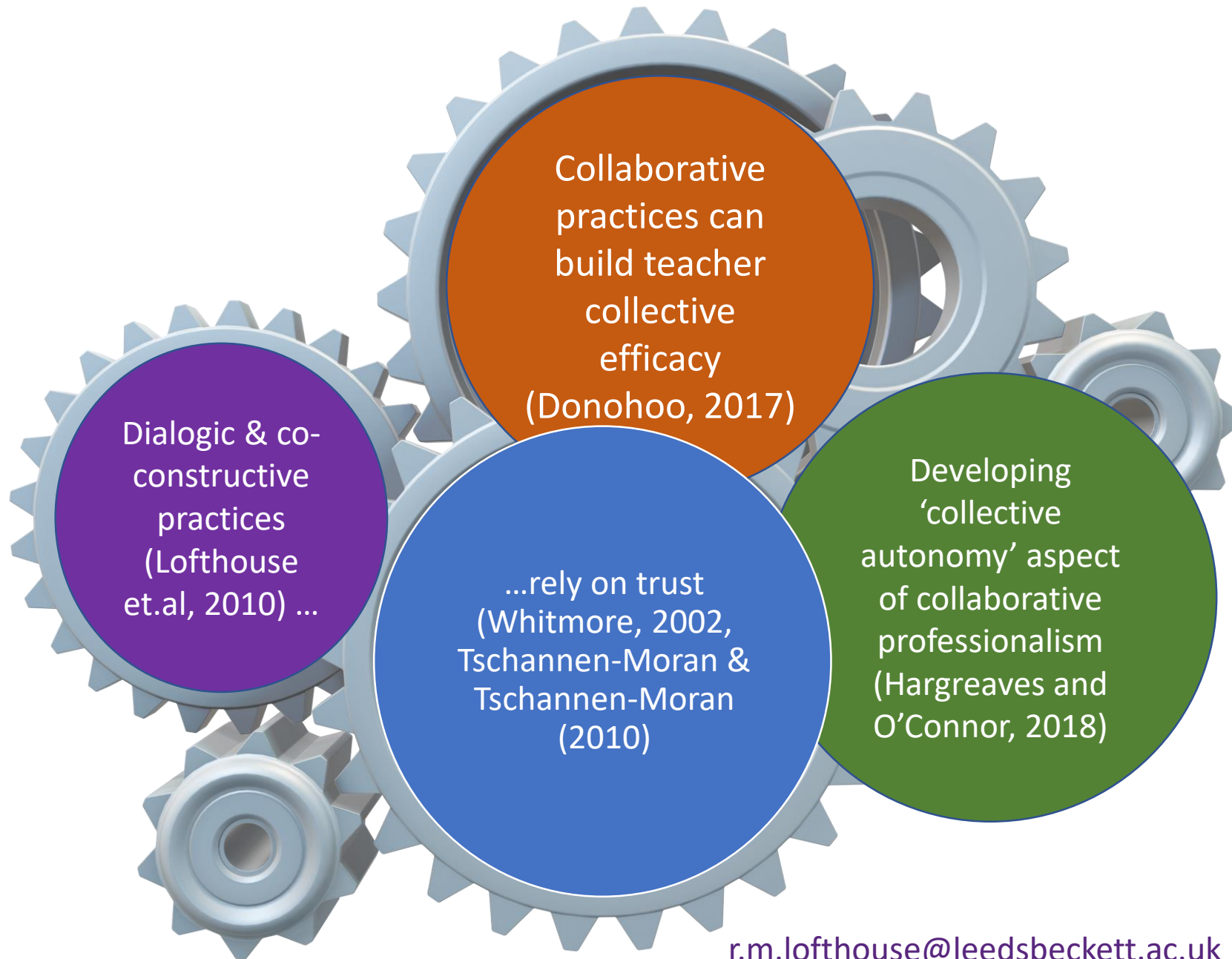
Collaborative practices require different leadership. They cannot be micro-managed but do need sustained support. Participants must accept the challenge in terms of workload & need to engage emotionally & cognitively.

Whilst all six teachers it to be a good idea, only three managed to systematically record accounts over a period of time. Setting oneself to notice & systematically record events requires commitment.’ (Brown, 2017, p.13.)

Evidence indicates collaborative practices work well; e.g. when the participants take ownership. Workload will remain an issue, but it is possible to at least feel positive that the effort is enjoyable, productive and creates genuine learning opportunities.

Discussion; resolving tensions

- Resolving these tensions provides genuine opportunities for collaborative practices to make a difference to the working lives of teachers and leaders in schools and colleges, and at the time of writing there are many reasons why we might need to focus attention on this.
- Teacher wellbeing and teacher retention are becoming problems which the system needs to address through policy decisions and changes to practice. The narratives offer insights into factors that might positively impact on teachers' capacity to sustain their work in the profession over time.
- Working collaboratively offers them opportunities to meet some of the challenges of the job head on, but in an environment where the challenges are shared and there is less anxiety is experienced, and to play a part in developing new approaches suited to the needs of their pupils, students and colleagues.



At a time when some schools are now being characterized as toxic for employees (Woodley and Morrison, 2018), these narratives do offer hope that this is not inevitable (despite current pressures of accountability), and indeed demonstrate the value and impact of appropriately supported and intelligently designed workplace learning practices.

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